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A DISCUSSION OF HISTORICAL CHRISTOLOGY.¹

This later work of Dr. DuBose will probably have even wider circulation than his "Soteriology of the New Testament," which appeared four years ago and even in that short time has made an evident impression upon the mind of the Church. The Doctor's style is certainly difficult: rather, indeed, he has none: the very artlessness of his composition is its charm. His themes of course are difficult, but his style is so to a disproportionate degree. The impression made upon the reader is of strenuous thought struggling with and through obstructive material; undoubtedly the composition of these works cost effort, and some corresponding effort is required on the reader's part to extract their meaning. The work under review is less open than the previous one to this criticism: the very subject, the very movement of thought, forced its expression to a better flow.

The title of this review precisely defines the scope of the work. In the preface we are told that its purpose is to trace the evolution of a process of thought,—the formation of the catholic doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ; therefore (p. 134) "we shall limit ourselves to such details as are actually necessary to indicate or illustrate the onward progress of the matter which we have in hand, the evolution of the doctrine, as distinguished from the truth or fact, of the person of Jesus Christ;" and again (p. 188) "our aim is not an historical exposition of successive theological or christological systems, but only the illustration through them of the principles which entered successively into the constitution and evolution of the true doctrine of the person of Christ." And this is the essential thing; this is what we and the Church and the world want or need. Who for example in this year of grace requires to be dragged through the dim and dusty

¹*The Ecumenical Councils:* by W. P. DuBose, S.T.D. The Christian Literature Co., New York.

labyrinth of the controversy over the time of keeping Easter? Yet that is the one point in which all the adverse criticisms agree that have fallen under this reviewer's eye, — that our author, to wit, has ventured to think for himself; that he has actually given us an *interpretation* instead of telling over again a tale twice, nay, twenty times told already. Unintelligent criticism surely! What the times demand is precisely such interpretation of facts often and well recounted, and heaped up oppressive mountains high by the industry of a long generation of investigators.

Dr. DuBose's ambition was not to add one more title to the list — already long enough — of text books of Church history for seminaries; he is explicit on this point at the outset: "The present volume does not profess to be properly a history. In so far as it is historical it is neither critical nor original. It deals with a well-known course of events . . . References to sources of information are superfluous in this well-worn period, and those who desire such can easily find them elsewhere." Some acquaintance with the outlines of Church history would of course contribute to the enjoyment of the book but is not necessary for its comprehension. Its weakest spot historically is its apology for the cruel and fickle Constantine; herein the Doctor justifies his statement above, for that apology is decidedly uncritical — quite sentimental, in fact. The emperor's awful guilt is extenuated on the ground of his "disappointment in Christianity;" the upshot of this special pleading is the extraordinary conclusion that he is above criticism — "judgment belongeth not unto us" — because we do not know what may have seemed to him to necessitate his actions! What villain of history might not escape sentence were such a fatalistic plea admitted? Further on (p. 138) our author writes with truth of Constantine's "shallow hopes" and "superficial acquaintance" with Christianity.

It is strange to hear the turbulent Council of Constantinople called "peaceful and tame" in comparison with the stately one of Nice, and altogether the view taken of that

Second General Council is inadequate: it did more than merely sweep away the debris of Nicene controversy, more than "simply to disestablish Arianism." The true analogy between the first two general councils is not remarked: as in the case of Arianism, the condemnation of Apollinarianism in A.D. 381 can scarcely be said to have scotched it, but simply ushered in a half-century of impassioned controversy that issued in a summons to another council. But enough of this: let us turn to a more congenial task, the setting forth of the thought of the book in its larger relations.

The strength of Apollinarianism consisted in its recoil from Arian emphasis on the creaturely toward insistence upon the divine side of our Lord's person, until at last that divinity "shone too brightly for all to be able to see and appreciate the completeness in its every detail of his humanity . . . Apollinaris was so concerned that our Lord should be God that he was not sufficiently willing he should be man." Hence ere long it became necessary for Theodore and the Council of Chalcedon to contend for his consubstantiality with man. Again, when deistic, Arian and Socinian views had prevailed for more than a century, Newman and his friends threw all their weight into the scale of the divinity until belief in that consubstantiality was endangered, and it required the catholic-minded Maurice to redress the balance. Finally, in America this familiar process of thought has been completed by the work before us: that reaction against the prevalent unitarianism of the middle of the century which we associate with the names of Mahan and De Koven has forced into luxuriant growth some notoriously Apollinarian germs: hence the imperative necessity of such a corrective as the work of Dr. DuBose. He charges the christology of the day with Monophysitism: "what that age—like our own—needed most to see in Christ, because it saw it least, was not the divine fact of God incarnate but the human fact of man redeemed . . . It remained for far-off future ages that have scarcely yet

arrived to take the Council of Chalcedon at its word and honestly construe the person of our Lord in the totality of his manhood as well as his Godhead . . . The two facts, of the very Godhead and the very manhood, of the completeness of the two natures in the unity of a single personality, were destined to lie side by side in the treasury of the Church's thought a long time before they should enter into a really organic and vital union. Indeed have they done so yet? . . . There is serious and long-standing confusion with regard to the union and relation of the divine and human natures and functions in the person of our Lord. Partial, defective views of his human activities, knowledge and power — a higher or psychical Docetism — characterize our current theology . . . [It is to be observed that this aspect of Christianity always appeals most powerfully to the heart of the popular faith. In proportion as it is less moral it has the appearance of being more religious. The more mystically we surrender our minds and wills and selves to the operations of the divine grace, and the less reflectively we strive to realize our own parts in the process of regaining our freedom and life in Christ Jesus, the more honor we feel ourselves to be doing to God who is our sole salvation.] . . . The constant disposition and effort to make our Lord more divine by making him less human tends only to reduce the incarnation to a semblance and an unreality . . . The actual Jesus was indeed the most human of men; and we get farther and farther away from him, as well as from any real and saving hold upon the divine realized in him, the farther we get in any direction from the reality of his humanity. . . . The Jesus of the synoptics is as simply, naturally, tragically human as the incarnate Word of St. John is divine."

It is true that a consequence of the Tractarian movement in minds of inferior order has been a morbid sensitiveness that winces at the slightest approach of criticism, that cries out as if struck on a sore spot whenever anywhere our Lord's consubstantiality with us is taken in earn-

est—is really held instead of being merely asserted. It is so easy, so fatally easy to say, “But Christ is God,” and be done henceforth with all Bible study, all theological and historical investigation, all thought whatsoever. Of such minds what our author says of Cyril of Alexandria is equally true: “of the possibility of a contribution of truth from the direction [of Antioch] such as was to be recognized and accepted in the Council of Chalcedon, he and his party seem to have caught no inkling.” The nemesis of this perverse attitude is a condition of unstable spiritual equilibrium, with grave moral and emotional disturbance. The ignorant mind is possessed with a conceit of its own infallibility, and in spite of Holy Scripture. in spite of the Apostolic canon against clerical calumny, sits in judgment on its brethren and circulates libellous accusations against them. Having thus inverted the natural order and subordinated charity to faith—rather, having flung it aside in the pursuit of heresy (ignorant all the while what a beam is in its eye)—its own faith corrupts; the supernatural is confounded with the preternatural, and the subject is given over to superstition. The Apocryphal Gospels stand here as warning pillars of salt, but at this stage are generally of no avail. The end of this sad history is that superstition caves into scepticism and consuming fear, and we behold the hideous spectacle of a heart full of secret unbelief, a mouth making grievous imputations against others’ orthodoxy, a temper growing ever more acrimonious. But by this time such a soul—or remnant of a party—is reduced to impotence, is devoid of influence, and the kindest treatment is to cover up its unhappy contentiousness and bitterness of spirit in oblivion.

It really seems as if the time had come when we might hope that the oscillations of thought would be less violent,—that less vehement reactions would be engendered to the loss of correlative truths,—that, in our author’s words, “one might stand for the divine in Christ and not the human and yet not deny the human but if need be stand for it

too, as it might seem to some, against the divine." This is an exact description of his own position, and may serve to guard the point above made against misconstruction: Dr. DuBose is no mere reactionary but a true theologian in that he endeavors faithfully and with success to keep the balance of truth aright: not to disparage any truth but to establish the harmony of all.

We have seen—it is a commonplace—that superstition, a one-sided preternaturalism, an attempt to suppress thought, engenders in the subject himself as well as in others a sceptical reaction—plays in fact into the hands of the infidel. Dr. DuBose has to set forth the primary postulate of religion and Christianity as against materialistic science, to maintain the existence of a faculty in man that apprehends spiritual truths and of a truth to be apprehended by that faculty. "To say that we have no such faculty, and that either there is no such divine to be apprehended or that the divine cannot be so apprehended by us, is to come to the inquiry with a prepossession which disqualifies for seeing the divine in Jesus if it is there. . . . The proof of it must in the very nature of it lie in criteria which are extrascientific [supersensory] . . . Aristotle defines that to be "rational" which is so to the rational or wise man, . . . as conversely he makes the objectively and truly rational the test of the right reason. And so St. Paul says, in perfect consonance with our Lord's own position, that that is spiritual truth which is so to the spiritual man, as conversely the spiritual man is he who understands spiritual truth . . . The Scriptures were found and received of the Church to be inspired because they were inspired." If the scientist makes again the common objection that this is reasoning in a circle, we reply, So is all life; life's a great *petitio principii*; an assumption, a taking something for granted. What is light?—that which is perceived by the eye. What is the eye?—that which perceives light. We posit as just as real a spiritual sense and its object, and maintain that the attempt to explain man by the physical senses only is

no explanation, is utterly inadequate, is supremely ridiculous. And so we come at last to the proper subject-matter of our volume — the doctrine of the person of Christ.

The distinction is clearly drawn at the outset between the *fact* and our *science* of Christ. "It is very evident that there is a double problem involved in the origin and appearance of Christianity in the world — the problem namely not only of its divine giving but also of its human receiving . . . While the truth as it is in Jesus has no history after it was finished in his ascension, the knowledge of it had a history as human and as natural as human nature itself . . . It is not necessary to believe that the apostles themselves had in their minds a developed and defined doctrine of the person and work of our Lord. The incarnate truth is ever more divinely present than it is humanly apprehended . . . The Church knows that Jesus Christ stands to us for a fact of God in nature and in humanity of which it may know the truth although it can forever only approximate the whole truth . . . — that however imperfectly it understands there is yet a perfect truth which it imperfectly understands . . . There is no question to it about Christ, the only question is of our Christology, — to what extent our science truly represents and expresses him."

After emphasizing the deep aversion of the simple Christian mind to speculation — owing in part to the felt difficulty of expressing divine things in human language, — the mass of conservative, even timid piety with which theological thought had to contend (and the same obscure fear, the same inertia beset us still), our guide conducts us, after Dorner, along the two main avenues of Christologic theory, determined of course by the dual nature or personality of the Lord. He shows how Ebionism, the human view of him, recrudesced in the Alogians and Paul of Samosata, and how all that Arianism had to add to Ebionism was just "a compulsory concession to the irresistible Christian demand for a human incarnation of God." It was perceived, that is, that the merely human did not adequately expound

Christ, and Arianism was a concession to the conviction that there was something superhuman about him. This is probably its only Christological interest, for "an incarnation of what is not God in what is not man has nothing in it of the reality and truth of the Christian faith or fact of the divine incarnation." At this point the convergence of the Docetic series—the divine view solely—brings us face to face with the great Trinitarian problem; "Was the whole of God—was, for example, the eternal Father—incarnate in Jesus Christ?"

No—that is Patripassianism, Sabellianism. If so, Ebionism being excluded, "in what sense was the divine Person who was incarnate *one* with God the Father?" Was he a divine attribute? No—that is Samosaténism. He was something more, for "if God is bare unity and absolute-ness we can not predicate of him wisdom or knowledge, love, will or action." Was he, then, as these words import, a veritable person in the proper acceptation of the term? No—that is Tritheism: "the different personal subjects within the Godhead ought not even remotely to be compared . . . with men." This is susceptible of the threatening inference that then the person proper was supplied from the human side: but to pass that by, something more than an attribute, whether it be Love or Reason, less than a Person, a Will, was incarnate in Jesus: what was it? What part of the one divine personality? Is an incarnation of a part of a Will thinkable?—It was an Hypostasis. What is that? A Subsistence. What is that? One of the distinctions in the divine nature. And so on in an endlessly repeating chain of affirmations that do not explain, of terms that only succeed in defining a hard thing by another equally hard, that have not even the value of symbols, for they are made to denote the inconceivable, the absolutely unintelligible,—something more than an attribute, less than a person: a Personule, a frustum of a person. And there the question rests to-day.

The work under consideration does not profess to be a

treatise on the Trinity but solely a Christological study. This must be held to account for an otherwise startling lacuna: on referring to the index we find a solitary reference to the "Holy Ghost"; turning to the page we discover three sentences about Macedonianism, which is dismissed as follows: "There is no real issue involved in the discussion which has not been already considered and we need not devote further consideration to the heresy." Were this omission not explicable as suggested it would seem to betray the fatal weakness common to all our theologians, consequent on confused thought about the Trinity, as regards the doctrine of the Spirit.

To descend to what our author has marked out as his peculiar field,—to consider his chief contribution; the most valuable part of the book, in fact its theme, its leading idea, is its criticism on Apollinarianism. Here he thinks deeply and feels intensely. (We must be on our guard against repetition). We are reminded that in the fourth century, during the contest with Arianism, it would be impossible, from the Athanasian side, to render to the humanity all its due. This was Apollinaris' opportunity—and his doctrine "crept into the inner heart of the Church while this was intent only upon excluding from itself the opposite vice" of Arianism. Apollinaris taught an abridged humanity—a humanity devoid of the rational soul, the spiritual, the essential element. Such an "incarnation is no true human redemption and completion . . . Of what use or interest is it to us . . . that God under a semblance of humanity should present to us a spectacle of human victory over sin and sorrow and death? What we want is not a divine ideal but a human actuality of these things . . . Of course according to Apollinaris since our Lord brought his humanity and his human holiness with him into the world, he was complete from the first; he had no real infancy or growth; he learned nothing, acquired nothing, encountered and overcame no real temptation, was in no true sense made perfect by the things he suffered nor really touched with any feeling of our infirm-

ity . . . He was no perfecting God for he perfected nothing, nor perfected man for he was perfected in nothing . . . It was not only essential he should have truly hungered and thirsted, been weary and suffered and died, but that he should also have been humanly ignorant and weak, been tempted, have prayed, believed, received grace and been saved, have overcome sin and conquered death, . . in accordance with all the laws and attributes of a real manhood, through a real human birth, infancy and ignorance, growth in knowledge, will and character, faith and obedience, holiness, righteousness and life." Hence the protest of a series of theologians great and little — Diodorus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius — terminating in an antithesis of the divine and human natures or persons,— and hence a fanatical preternaturalist reaction culminating in Eutyches' metathesis of the human until the very body of Jesus was declared to be unlike ours.

It is to be observed that this latter party is always the party of passion; it stands self-condemned by its ungodly, unchristian, inhuman and criminal violence — for to such a revolting end leads a self-constituted championship of a pretended "faith" which, minus reason, minus charity, is a prostitution of that sacred name. Of St. Chrysostom "Theophilus [of Alexandria] in his partisan blindness was capable of . . . saying in a public invective: 'He was not what he seemed to be; his guilt transcended all possible penalties; in the world to come he will endure an eternal penalty . . . Christ himself will condemn him to be cast into outer darkness.'" Such is the temper that later tore with red-hot pincers the flesh of saints and poured molten lead down their throats. At the Robber Synod, "Flavian, who had almost alone had the strength and courage to oppose the violence of Dioscorus, received at the hands of the more brutal monks physical injuries that soon after resulted in his death . . . In the violence that disgraced beyond all parallel the closing scenes, only one of the Roman legates could withstand the intimidation that carried everything before it

sufficiently to utter his 'contradicitur' to the proceedings."

In the horror-stricken hush that followed these outrages was convened the great Council of Chalcedon, and there, inspired by Leo of Rome and in this point (we may truly believe) by the Holy Ghost, was uttered the famous *INDIVISE, INCONVERTIBILITER, INSEPARABILITER, INCONFUSE*—the high water mark of human thought. "For the first time, alongside of the Athanasian statement of the real divinity of the incarnate Lord was posited something like a corresponding and adequate statement of the reality and actuality of his humanity." Yet as in the case of the Nicene and first Constantinopolitan, "the decrees of Chalcedon were rather the beginning than the end of a controversy with regard to the main subject-matter of its action." Dr. DuBose criticizes Leo's definition as a mere affirmation, not a satisfactory solution of the problem. And as a matter of fact what light is thrown upon the Trinitarian question by that definition? Leo furnishes another equivalent for that mysterious personule; it equals a divine nature, we learn. But alas! impersonal nature may be added to nature ad infinitum yet never equal a Person. It is true: we are left in the dark as to how two natures coalesce in a single personality. Furthermore, Leo's view of the human nature is inadequate; "No really human significance" is conceded by him to our Lord higher than the merely corporeal; and yet he distributes his operations among the natures. Plainly, he had not "arrived at a satisfactory conception or appreciation either of our Lord's completeness in each nature or of his unity in both."

His weakness in the latter regard explains the great Eutychian or Monophysitic apostasy that characterized the sixth century—a century strangely neglected by students in general, though it contained the wondrous reign of Justinian. The Christological movements of that reign are in fact of extraordinary interest and importance: the whole Docetic series of heresies is recapitulated by them in subtler forms. The Aphthartodocetae followed Eutyches in assert-

ing difference in kind between Jesus' body and ours: his was immortal by nature. To this sect Justinian himself was affiliated in his last years. Against this view the Severians maintained Christ's physical consubstantiality with us, while denying any human limitations of his mind. Thus they recall the early Patripassians. Severus "is wholly unwilling to concede to the human soul that reality which he concedes to the human body. Our Lord, e. g., has but one consciousness, one knowledge, and that the divine. From the moment of the union of the natures, i. e., from the moment of the conception in the womb, the consciousness of Jesus was that of the divine Logos; his knowledge was omniscience . . . So our Lord had only one, and that the infinitely and eternally perfect divine will. He was no more capable of moral than of mental progress and growth." Dr. DuBose omits to mention the schism caused in the Severian ranks by the rise of a party that contested the enormity of this infantile omniscience, and were therefore branded by the majority with the opprobrious term "Agnoetae" — "Ignoramuses." Thus Monophysitism was pushed, step by step, along the line of the trichotomist psychology until at last it was forced upon the higher plane of Monothelitism. The pressure of orthodox thought was so strong that Honorius, bishop of Rome, the Monothelite spokesman, conceded every human faculty to Christ save Will, for which he substituted the Logos. This finer, ethical Apollinarianism was contested by the Athanasius of the seventh century, the Theodore redivivus — Maximus Confessor. He "did much to reestablish and preserve the truth of a . . . moral and spiritual humanity in our Lord . . . vindicating the position of the will as a constituent element in the idea of a rational being." Within the pale of the ethical accordingly the battle was fought out, and Dyothelitism triumphed, employing the very terms of the Chalcedonian formula, at the Sixth General Council and third of Constantinople, in the year 680. Under shelter of the anathemas of that council simple Christian faith may ultimately have to retreat before the evolutions of

the theologians. A divine will, not the Father, united with a true human will!—It is safe to say that the tremendous significance of that definition has not dawned upon the theological world.

Even with Maximus, however, our critic has a controversy. "The ablest of the theologians," he writes, "who had gone so far and done so much to vindicate the now almost complete construction of our Lord's manhood faltered at the last step"; though asserting the human will, in the supposed service of a perfect sinlessness he denied it free agency. This is the point of departure of that remarkable movement that originated in far-away Spain in the following century: Adoptionism. It consisted, in a word, in an assertion of a genuinely human ethical experience in our Lord. One looks forward with some impatience, as in previous discussions, to an exact statement of our author's relation to the new system—his point of contact with and divergence from it, and some criticism other than the commonplace that like Nestorianism it imperilled the hypostatic union. Dr. DuBose naturally and properly enough undertakes at the outset an apology for Adoptionism, which takes the direction of a denial that it ever "for an instant intentionally or consciously implied two egos or subjects in our Lord." Hence we read with regret a few pages further that "on the whole there can be little doubt that the Adoptionist representation of the man Christ Jesus as a limited and individual human being like one of us did justify the charge . . . that their position led practically to a Nestorian twofold personality of the Lord." And so, alas! this is the upshot of the prodigious analysis we have been tracing—a phenomenological humanity only in Christ. This is our Doctor's parting gift, all he has to offer us—in the last analysis, a divine ego masquerading behind the *phenomena* of a non-existent human ego! "It is perfectly true to say that our Lord assumed an impersonal human nature." Consider how clinging must be the taint of Docetism, how it is worked into our very marrow, if at the end of such a discussion, of anti-do-

cetic motive, all that such a mind has to leave us is a docetic solution, which we must sadly say is *ipso facto* none at all! This is the ground of our complaint, that having claimed for Christ every human faculty and activity not sinful, only to be connoted by the term "personal," having built up his nature to the full proportions of the personal, by an evasion (not Dr. DuBose's own but common to the theological race) that personal, in the supposed service of the hypostatic union, is minimized forthwith into a natural, and we are immediately confronted by a glaring sphinx of a question: What then is that personal? — 'Tis x , an unknown quantity, a *tertium quid*, a *caput mortuum*, and must be relegated to the limbo of Trinitarian personules, — unless one should have the hardihood to identify it with that in which alone Christ's human *nature* differs from our *persons*, i. e., sin. Is that the personal *quid* he was without?

In the last analysis human nature equals self-determination, equals personality. It is our nature to be personal; truism as it is, it appears that it cannot be too often repeated: it is our nature to be personal. By this ours is distinguished from animal nature. Therefore any who affirm that the Logos assumed human nature affirm *ipso facto* that he assumed human personality: there is no escape, and who would wish it?: they are equivalent terms: personality is what distinguishes our nature from that of beasts. We must grasp the dilemma by both horns and affirm against Apollinaris and all his tribe that two persons, the two moral natures that the Church teaches, can be one person, and are one in the person of Jesus Christ. Why should this truth, which rightly comprehended is the most inspiring ideal, inspire instead "constant fear"? What is the "danger" in this uplifting harmony? Duality, duly considered, is essential to unity. We may interpret that union as the inclusion (not absorption), the interpenetration of the less by the greater; the figure of multiplication may aid understanding of it: as one into one forever produces only a richer one, so does the divine in our Lord multiplied into the human.

“ Within the Catholic Church itself, after and in spite of the condemnation of general councils, the higher Docetism or practical denial of our Lord’s humanity in its higher aspects and functions resumed its sway. In the indiscriminating and wholesale rejection of Adoptionism the Christianity of the middle ages crushed out the last effort before the Reformation to attach a due and proportionate and vital importance to that very and complete humanity in all its parts and functions which our Lord assumed and in which alone he was very and indeed man or accomplished a veritable redemption and completion of human nature. . . . The Church’s action in the matter is happily not to be received as universal or final . . . Catholic thought was not as able as it is now to see Jesus exactly as he is in himself.

GREENOUGH WHITE.